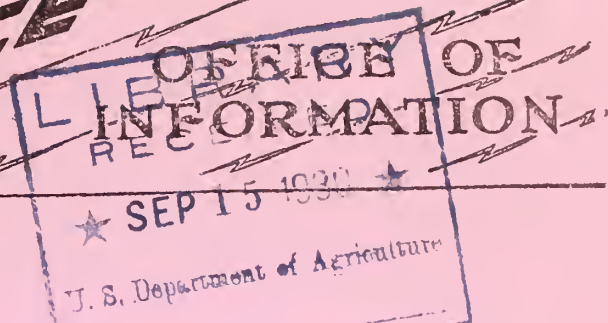


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Housekeepers Chat

Thursday September 18, 1930

Not for Publications

Subject: "What School Opening Means to the Home." Talk prepared by Mary Collopy, Colorado Agricultural College, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Bulletin available: "School Lunches."

--ooOoo--

School days are with us again. Days of readin' and writin' and 'rithmetic, but no longer taught to the tune of a hick'ry stick.

The curriculum has changed; old methods have given way to newer theories of teaching. All is different, parents and grandparents point out!

But not so in the home ! Opening of school still means to all homes what it has meant for generations: more washing and ironing, more mending and sewing, more baking, more careful planning of time, and more running of errands by mother.

Thus states Mary Collopy of the Colorado Agricultural College. Let me read you more of her talk -- it contains some splendid ideas.

Children who wear overalls all summer, and go barefooted, are thrust into blouses and shoes. More washing and ironing! More baking, because the major part of the school lunch must be made up of sandwiches. Yes, mother has to bake more bread, more cookies. Mother's feet are more tired after the opening of school, for she no longer has the help of the older children in running after the little ones, nor in getting wood, coal, and so on.

Only those of us who attended country school before the days of good roads, consolidated schools, and busses, know what takes place in the average farm home before the children finally "get off." Is there a mother listening in this morning, who hasn't heard some of these rapid-fire questions?

"Mamma, where are my good shoes?"

"Mamma, where did you put my coat?"

"Mamma, is my lunch ready?"

"Mother, I broke my shoe string, and you know I'll be late."

"Mother, I can't find those arithmetic problems. Did you burn any papers?"

"Oh gee, Mom, I did wash my face! Honest, is my neck dirty?"

Is it any wonder that mother gives a sigh of relief, as she sees the last child started down the road, or watches him climb into the bus? It takes a minute or two, for mother to collect her thoughts, and plan the rest of the day's work. Oh, dear! Jennie has left her rubbers, after all. Her shoes will be soaking wet -- but the bus is out of sight.

Is this state of affairs one which we should all accept, as perfectly natural, necessary, and unavoidable? Does this confusion exist in every home? Or, are there mothers who have started right? Mothers who can manage the starting off to school in a more satisfactory manner than in the scene just described?

To offer any abstract panacea for these nerve-racking ills might bring forth the comment: "That's all right on paper; it's easier said than done; wait until she tries it out on a morning when the pump is frozen, and the cow spills milk all over Jimmie's school shoes."

Let us, then, take our suggestions from a well-known farm home in Colorado. Four children leave that home for school every morning. The mother doesn't dread the opening of school. Analyzing her secrets of success, I think of no better word than understanding. ^{--perfect understanding} We might call it system, but that system could never operate without the fine understanding of individual responsibility which exists among the members of that happy family.

Father knows that his delayed rising means hurried breakfasts, or no breakfasts at all. So he meets the cook stove at exactly the same hour, every morning of the school year. Mother can depend upon that. The fire is ready for her when she starts breakfast. Both parents understand the importance of a good breakfast in the lives of their children for that day.

Long before those four children reached school age they learned that disorder in the care of their clothes would not be tolerated. It now seems natural to them to look after their own clothes. The father makes fun of any son who asks mother to locate his wraps. He asks how he can ever trust him to work out in the tool shed, if he isn't orderly. Plenty of hooks and hangers are provided in the clothes closets, and old-fashioned wardrobe, so the boys and girls can take a pride in their clothes. The little girls understand that no Saturday must pass without washing and ironing of handkerchiefs, and mending of stockings. Even the ten-year-old girl darns nicely.

These children have been trained from babyhood to accept duties cheerfully. They are made to feel that going to school is a privilege not to be taken for granted.

In this home I have never seen much confusion in connection with the preparation of four school lunches. Every evening, as soon as clothes are changed and chores begun, the little girl of nine empties the lunch pails, washes them, and puts them on the back porch to air. Incidentally, I might mention that their lunch boxes are the type with the lid attached. (Who does not know the amount of time lost in looking for dinner pail lids?)

In a small drawer in the kitchen cabinet are kept supplies for the lunch pails -- paper napkins, waxed paper, and many porcelain jars (which formerly contained salves, etc.) for the carrying of raw vegetable salads, jams, or stewed fruit. On my last visit I added to that drawer a supply of paper spoons, purchased at the novelty store for a small price.

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Three outstanding aids to the speedy packing of these lunches I notice there always: Sharp knife for cutting the bread, loaves of bread baked in individual pans of the size suitable for sandwiches, and a variety of sandwich spreads within reach. The mother told me that she borrowed this idea from a successful sandwich shop. She argued that she, too, could just as well have jars of the well-known sandwich spreads on hand. She has ground raisins, mixed with salad dressing, peanut butter, mixed cheese, nuts, etc. Cold meats, of course, are added from the leftover meat. I have often seen her creaming a little bowl of butter while the children wash the supper dishes. This she keeps in a fairly warm place so it will spread easily the following morning.

The children like to put up the lunches; they take turns at it. Time will not permit further enumeration of the little schemes which are employed in this household to bring about peace and order. There is no restraint.

Last, but not least, the parents in this home have an unfaltering conviction that quarreling, indulged in just before the children start off for school, is the worst possible thing which could happen. They are wise enough to understand that sensitive children may feel the sting of such outbursts all day long, whereas they, through contact with the world, are so constituted that the unpleasant incidents are forgotten before the children are settled in school.

That's all of Miss Collopy's talk. We are all much obliged to her, for so many good suggestions. There's one thing I'd like to add. Do you know that the Department of Agriculture publishes a free bulletin called "School Lunches?" I'll be glad to send it to you.
